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RICHARD KILIAN/GENEVA

SEA TREATIES

ANNCR:

THERE IS NO CONVINCING SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT THE MEDITERRANEAN -- THE WORLDS LARGEST INLAND SEA -- IS DIEING. BUT IT IS SERIOUSLY SICK. AND SCIENTIST SAY IF MEASURES ARE NOT TAKEN PROMPTLY THAT ILLNESS MAY BECOME INCURABLE. SOMETHING IS BEING DONE, AND VOA CORRESPONDENT RICHARD KILIAN TELLS US ABOUT IT IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM GENEVA.

VOICE:

JUST TWO YEARS AGO IN BARCELONA, SPAIN SIXTEEN OF THE EIGHTEEN NATIONS THAT BORDER ON THE MEDITERRANEAN ADOPTED THREE INTERNATIONAL TREATIES TO CURB POLLUTION OF THAT SEA. NOW, WITH THE RATIFICATION BY SPAIN, MONACO, TUNISIA, MALTA, LEBANON AND YUGOSLAVIA THOSE TREATIES BECOME INTERNATIONAL LAW SUNDAY, FEBRUARY TWELFTH.

ONE TREATY COMMITS MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES TO PROTECT THE SEA FOR THE BENEFIT OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS. ANOTHER OUTLAWS THE DUMPING OF DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES FROM THE LAND BY SHIPS AT SEA OR AIRCRAFT FLYING OVER IT. THE THIRD CALLS FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN SIGNALLING AND FIGHTING MASSIVE OIL SPILLS.

AS FAR AS INTERNATIONAL TREATIES GO, THOSE CONCERNING THE MEDITERRANEAN HAVE BEEN DEALTH WITH SWIFTLY. DOCTOR MOSTAFA TOLBA, THE EGYPTIAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM, SAID THE SPEED OF THIS ACTION REFLECTS THE DETERMINATION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES TO TAKE PROTECTIVE MEASURES WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME.

THE MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE OF MEDITERRANEAN POLLUTION REMAINS TOXIC WASTES POURING DOWN FROM THE EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN INTERIOR THROUGH THE RHONE, THE PO,AND THE NILE RIVERS. INDUSTRIAL WASTE, SEWAGE, AND AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS ACCOUNT FOR EIGHTY FIVE PERCENT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN POLLUTION. WORK IS WELL ADVANCED ON A TREATY COVERING LAND BASED POLLUTION. UNITED NATIONS EXPERTS HOPE THAT SUCH A TREATY WILL BE READY FOR SIGNING IN 1979.

THE TREATY BANNING DUMPING BY SHIPS OR AIRCRAFT CONTAINS A BLACK LIST OF PRODUCTS SUCH AS MERCURY, CADMIUM, STABLE PLASTICS, DDT, RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES, CRUDE OIL AND HYDROCARBONS. THERE IS ALSO A GREY LIST OF PRODUCTS WHICH CAN BE DUMPED, BUT ONLY WITH GOVERNMENTAL PERMISSION. THIS INCLUDES ZINC, COPPER, COBALT, SILVER, CYANIDES, FLUORIDES AND DISEASE CRUSING MICRO-ORGANISMS.

PETER THACHER, THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM, SAYS IT WILL UP TO THE COUNTRIES THEMSELVES TO MAKE SURE THE TREATY IS ENFORCED. BUT ALREADY HUNDREDS OF THE MEDITERRANEANS MARINE SCIENTISTS ARE LOOSELY LINKED IN A MONITORING NETWORK AMONG FIFTEEN OF THHE COUNTRIES INVOLVED. AND AN OIL POLLUTION COMBATTING CENTER HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED ON MALTA TO GATHER INFORMATION ON OIL SPILLS AND CO-ORDINATE EFFORTS TO FIGHT SUCH POLLUTION.

THE EFFECT OF THE TREATIES WON'T BE IMMEDIATELY VISIBLE TO THE ONE HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST OR TO THE ONE HUNDRED MILLION TOURISTS WHO GO THERE EACH YEAR. BUT STJEPAN KECKES, THE YUGOSLAV MARINE SCIENTIST WHO CO-ORDINATED THE MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN SAID THIS IS MORE THAN A QUESTIONS OF HOLIDAY MAKERS FEET. IT IS, HE ADDED, A QUESTION OF LIFE AND DEATH FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN...OUR SEA OF MEMORIES.

JS/RCS